HIST 459 Nazism and the Holocaust
Spring 2021
Prof. Lora Wildenthal
TR 8-9:20 (yes, that's a.m.—we can do it!) on Zoom
late April revision to remove final presentation

(Constitution of the Weimar Republic, Germany's first democracy)

(Map of the invasion of Poland[1])

Course description from the GA Seminar uses sources from the time and historians' interpretations to analyze Nazism and the Holocaust, especially pre-war racial policy; economic policy; labor; the war experience; and the phases and legacies of the Holocaust.

More about the course this Spring 2021 We will emphasize in our common readings how the Nazi movement seized power and turned the Weimar Republic into a dictatorship. Both German traditions as well as political contingency made this happen. We will trace the compounding series of violations of the constitution of the first German republic, the "Weimar Republic." We will also emphasize the context of war for the Holocaust. Too often, war is considered a political event to be studied separately from society or the years before or afterwards. We will give attention to this particular case of a wider phenomenon: war's enabling of human rights violations on massive scales. Our common readings will give you a grounding in these two key issues, and especially the first reading will help spark ideas for your research paper. Note: You are always welcome to read *half* of the common reading, if your time does not permit you to read all of it.

[1] created by Wikipedia user Listowy, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1256809)

Our common readings will be limited, because your main task is to write a **research paper on a question or problem of your choice**, and that will require additional reading time on your part. If you have never done a research paper before, you will be busy, but you will get the guidance you need in this class. You will draft and revise a full-length research paper that will be suitable for submission to, for example, the *Rice Historical Review*, if you wish. Experience shows that generating sufficient page length is not a problem, even for students who have never written such a long paper. Rather, clear and efficient argument and presentation of the material are the challenges, and they are challenges for everyone. This major assignment is broken down into parts: prospectus, two presentations, text chunks, draft, and final version. There is time built in to the syllabus for you to make progress at key moments on your paper. Students have used this format many times and done well.

You will develop your own research question—a question to which you do not already know the answer. You will gather sources from the time and place under investigation, "primary sources," and they will be your object of study. You will also locate writings of fellow scholars who have considered questions similar to yours, "secondary sources," which will help you in your investigation, particularly when it comes to filling in background. I will urge you to dive into reading your key primary source(s) *first*, and read the secondary sources only after you have formed an opinion of the primary one(s). It is more interesting to form your own question and answer it than to collect fact after fact in a seemingly endless mission to describe. Therefore, I will steer you away from saying your paper is "about" something or "covers" something. Rather, your paper "asks" something or "argues" something. In your paper, information is necessary but information alone is not the point. The point is to ask a question and answer it, as best you can given available primary sources and time. The research question and the primary sources need to fit each other. Sometimes you should change your question to fit some good primary sources you found; sometimes you have to look for different primary sources.

What is the difference again between a primary and secondary source? Any text can theoretically serve as either a primary or a secondary source; the difference is in how you choose to use it. Are you asking about its nature, challenging it, analyzing it? Or are you using it to look up a fact, and treating its author as a colleague of yours rather than treating the text and its author as your object of study? If I am studying German Communists under Nazi rule, I may study a police report as a primary source and consult a book by a historian on Communists in the Nazi period for background. But if I want to study how historians have discussed over time the plight of Communists under Nazi rule, then the book by the historian becomes a primary source. (However, the period of focus has shifted from the Nazi era to whatever time period in which those historians are writing.) *Your answers to your research question need to come from your primary sources.* If your answers come from secondary sources, then you are repeating your fellow scholars' conclusions (if done on purpose, that is a literature review or historiographical essay), rather than presenting your own original research.

How to contact me Email is best: wildenthal@rice.edu My cell phone number is 832 975 9005. My "office hours"—a drop-in time when you can talk to me without making any

appointment—are **Fridays 2-4 p.m.** For now, that is Zoom only. The link is in our Canvas site. If things get better, I will come to campus for those who may wish to meet face to face, and I can meet on Zoom from there too. I won't be on campus at other times, however, so don't waste your time looking for me at my office at other times. You are welcome to stay on Zoom after class to talk if that is a good time for you.

Learning objectives and course goals Successful students will gain familiarity with the historical narrative and key historians' arguments concerning the Nazi regime and the Holocaust. They will also hone specific research and writing skills with a full-length research paper based on primary sources (usually in translation). In this class, the successful student will gain or further develop specific skills related to developing a workable research question, finding primary and secondary sources through Fondren Library, oral presentation of material that is new to one's audience, and drafting and revising the paper to produce a well-written final version that shows a clear argument and conclusions based on primary evidence.

Course requirements All assignments have instructions and a grading rubric that you can use as a checklist.

Assignment 1 40% One page of notes for each reading. There are 17 "readings," that is, occasions where you are asked to read (all or part of) something that the whole class is also reading. (Actually there are 16 days on which we meet to discuss a common reading, but on one day we discuss 2 different common readings and you will have a set of notes for each.) Organize your notes according to a template tailored to our class (see grading rubric). Each is worth 2.3%, and together they will comprise 40% of the course grade. This will give everyone a common preparation for class discussions. Upload your page of notes anytime up to the beginning of the class when we discuss that reading.

Assignment 2 60% Research paper, ca. 20-30 pages long, on a research question related to the course. "Related to the course" means that someone outside our class would not be mystified as to why your paper was written in a course entitled "Nazism and the Holocaust." This major assignment is broken into the following parts:

> **10%** 1-2-paragraph-long **prospectus with at least 15 solid bibliographical references**. Watch out—there are two due dates for this assignment. This is because you will incorporate comments that you get in class and submit a revised prospectus and bibliography for your actual grade. Due 21 February by midnight via Canvas.
>
> **10% 6 chunks of drafted text, 750 words each** (worth 1.67% each). The key to success in a major writing project is to chip away at it over time. This part of the assignment rewards you for demystifying your research paper and making steady progress over several weeks. You can (and should) incorporate your text chunks into your big paper. These are due each week in Weeks 6-11 on Sundays by midnight, via Canvas.

10% 2 presentations (3-4 minutes, recorded or live, plus 6-7 minutes live Q&A for total of 10 minutes onstage), worth 5% ~~each~~, in Week 5 ~~and on the date of the scheduled final exam (that date will be set by the registrar after the semester has begun).~~ If you record yours, make sure it is in the Media Gallery on Canvas before the date of your presentation. JUST ONE PRESENTATION REQUIRED. THE MISSING 5% WILL BE ADDED TO THE FINAL VERSION OF THE PAPER. THIS IS BECAUSE OUR SCHEDULED FINAL WAS PLACED IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE END OF ALL FINALS, LEAVING NO TIME TO USE INSIGHTS FROM THE PRESENTATION AND Q&A TO INFORM THE FINAL VERSION OF THE PAPER.

10% full-length draft that one or more other students will read, due 20 April right before class starts, via Canvas.

~~**20%**~~ **25% final version of paper**, due by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of finals, via Canvas.

Attendance Everyone can miss 4 class meetings (= 2 weeks) no questions asked. These are for any and all reasons, including official Rice activities, illness, or just the need for a break. The student does not have to do the assigned reading or notes for the day a "freebie" absence is used. If the "freebie" absence falls on a day on which an assignment that is part of the research is due, the student should plan on turning in/ doing that assignment the next time they come to class (because those do need to get done if the paper is to get done smoothly). **Please note:** If you do come to class but don't do the assignment related to that day, I will either count it toward one of your freebie absences or give an F on the assignment—your decision. If it is necessary to miss more than 4 class meetings, the student needs to meet with me one-on-one to discuss missed materials for at least 30 minutes for every class missed. If absences exceed 4 class meetings and student does not arrange makeup appointments (I may or may not remind the student, but it's not my responsibility!), the course grade will be reduced by one letter grade for every additional absence (e.g. if the student were getting an A, then with 5 absences and no makeup discussion the course grade would be a B, with 6 a C, etc.).

No late work if you are not absent. This is not because you are expected to be perfect, but because late work drags you down. Done is better than perfect—turn it in and move on. The best thing you can do is to turn your attention to the next assignment, so that it can get done on time.

Grading Each presentation or piece of writing will be graded using only A, B, or C, with no plus or minus. The grading rubrics show the criteria. For your course grade, however, I will use the full range of plus and minus grades, because the rest of Rice does. **So how are those grades of A, B, and C for individual assignments converted into the course grade?** I will turn the letters into numbers: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, and F = 0. As each assignment component is weighted, the numerical grade is multiplied by its weight percentage (e.g. an A assignment worth 13% of the course grade would be calculated as 4 x .13) and the results are added up to produce a fully weighted course grade. Then what? Let's say that the fully weighted numerical course grade is 3.4. How does that become a letter grade to be recorded as your official course grade? 3.4

might turn out to be a B+ or it might be an A-. I will clump together similar numerical course grades and see what things look like. **My grading principle is that like achievements should get like grades.** There is no limit on how many people can get an A (or a B or C), so there is no curve in that sense. But if many students have a course grade of higher than 3.4, and some have grades that are much higher, it is hard to imagine that 3.4 could be an A or A+. A and A+ are the highest grades I have at my disposal, and it probably wouldn't be fair to lump a 3.9 and a 3.4 into the same kind of A. In that sense, there is a curve: others' performance could affect how your performance is judged. Again, I don't want to give like grades to unlike achievements. While there is some uncertainty for you in this system, you should be able to plug in your existing and expected grades to see pretty much where you stand numerically at any time.

What specifications do I want for the writing assignments? Please use 12-size font. Please turn in a regular Word document rather than a PDF. That makes it easier for me to put comments on the document.

Any student with a documented **disability** seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities also need to contact Disability Support Services in Allen Center, Room 111 (adarice@rice.edu).

No plagiarism—I am paid to grade YOUR work, not someone else's. All written work must be entirely your own work. Grades are permanent record of your effort, and therefore I take plagiarism seriously. Even if you think you know what is and isn't plagiarism, I ask you to **read through the brief Rice document "Academic Fraud and the Honor System," at honor.rice.edu** (choose "Honor System Handbook," then "Academic Fraud and the Honor System."

Assigned readings for purchase (in the order in which we will read them) These are ordered at the campus bookstore. I am not placing anything on reserve at Fondren. Some of these books are also available via Fondren Library online.

Caplan, Jane. *Nazi Germany: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN 978-0198706953. In Fondren, but not online via Fondren.

Hett, Benjamin Carter. *The Death of Democracy.* Hitler's Rise to Power and the Downfall of the Weimar Republic. New York: Henry Holt, 2019. ISBN 978-1250210869 In Fondren, but not online via Fondren.

Bridenthal, Renate, Atina Grossmann, and Marion A. Kaplan, eds. When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984. ISBN 978-0853456438 In Fondren, and available online via Fondren.

Bergen, Doris. *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*. 3rd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. ISBN 978-1442242289 In Fondren, and available online via Fondren.

Klüger, Ruth. *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered.* Foreword by Lore Segal. New York: Feminist Press, 2002. ISBN 978-1558614369 In Fondren, but not online via Fondren. As of January 2021, checked out, so you would need to recall it.

Assigned readings available to you on Canvas (in the order in which we will read them)

"When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany: Twentieth Anniversary Retrospective." *German History* 22.4 (2004): 600–612.

Campt, Tina. *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. Pp. 1-9, 25-29, 63-89.

Hamburg Institute for Social Research, *Crimes of the German Wehrmacht: Dimensions of a War of Annihilation 1941-1944*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2004. Available at http://www.verbrechen-der-wehrmacht.de/pdf/vdw_en.pdf

Schedule of Class Meetings

Week 1 Introductions
Tuesday, 26 January
Introductions
The task in this class: answering a question, not listing facts
What we know, some things to know
4 possible paper topics
Thursday, 28 January
Discuss Caplan, pp. xvii and 1-87
Go over syllabus and over grading rubrics

Week 2 Introductions; Weimar Republic and the Nazi Seizure of Power
Tuesday, 2 Feb
Discuss Caplan, pp. 88-141
A second look at your 4 possible paper topics
Thursday, 4 Feb
Discuss Hett, pp. xi-xix, 1-61 (to end of 2nd chapter)
A third look at your 4 possible paper topics

Week 3 Weimar Republic and the Nazi Seizure of Power, continued
Tuesday, 9 February
Discuss Hett, pp. 62-183 (to end of 6th chapter)
A fourth look at your 4 possible paper topics
Thursday, 11 February
Discuss Hett, pp. 184-235 (rest of book)

Week 4 ***This week never happened. Therefore, no freebie absences could have been used this week.***
~~**Tuesday, 16 February**~~
~~**Thursday, 18 February**~~
~~**Sunday, 21 February by midnight** Turn in prospectus and bibliography~~

Week 5 Your research paper: preparations, brief presentations, prospectuses
Be reading all or part of a primary source for your paper this week.
Tuesday, 23 February
Open discussion of paper projects
Thursday, 25 February
2-minute "ready or not" presentations—*if you are not totally ready, we will understand!*
Present your project and a chosen primary source to the class
Sunday, 28 February by midnight Turn in prospectus and bibliography

Week 6 Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany
Tuesday, 2 March
Discuss ~~*When Biology Became Destiny* 20th anniversary roundtable~~ *You will get an automatic A for the notes for that deleted reading*
Bridenthal et al., pp. xi-xiv and 1-65 (some of the Weimar essays)
Thursday, 4 March
discuss Bridenthal et al., pp. 174-196 (Kaplan essay on feminism and anti-Semitism)
Sunday, 7 March, by midnight Turn in text chunk #1

Week 7 Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany, continued
Tuesday, 9 March
discuss Bridenthal et al., pp. 66-108, 131-173 (Weimar-era sexual politics, conservative gender roles)
Thursday, 11 March
discuss paper projects
Sunday, 14 March, by midnight Turn in text chunk #2

Week 8 Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany, continued
Tuesday, 16 March
NO CLASS – "sprinkle day"
Thursday, 18 March
discuss discuss Bridenthal et al., pp. 199-362 (non-Jewish and Jewish women in Nazi era)
Sunday, 21 March, by midnight Turn in text chunk #3

Week 9 Afro-Germans; War on the Eastern Front
Tuesday, 23 March
discuss Campt
Thursday, 25 March
discuss Hamburg Institute for Social Research on Wehrmachtausstelling
Sunday, 28 March, by midnight Turn in text chunk #4

Week 10 Genocide amid War
Tuesday, 30 March
discuss Bergen, pp. 1-127
Thursday, 1 April

discuss Bergen, pp. 129-166
Sunday, 4 April, by midnight Turn in text chunk #5

Week 11 Genocide amid War, continued
Tuesday, 6 April
discuss Bergen, pp. 167-310
Thursday, 8 April
NO CLASS – "sprinkle day"
Sunday, 11 April, by midnight Turn in text chunk #6

Week 12 Work on research papers
Read all or part of a key secondary source this week
Tuesday, 13 April
Ca. 5 individual meetings on research papers during class time
Thursday, 15 April
Ca. 5 individual meetings on research papers during class time
Remaining students will schedule at other times this week.

Week 13 Work on research papers, continued
Tuesday, 20 April
Turn in paper draft
Discuss drafts
Thursday, 22 April
Discuss drafts

Week 14 Surviving and Living
Tuesday, 27 April
Discuss Klüger, pp. 9-131
Thursday, 29 April
Discuss Klüger, pp. 133-214

~~On the date of the **scheduled final exam** we will have presentations. (that date will be set by the registrar after the semester has begun).~~

The final version of your paper will be due by the last day of finals. **Final exam period** = 5-12 May, so the final version of research paper is due on 12 May at 5:00 p.m.